



# Online Safety and Social Media Policy

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## **Introduction**

This policy provides guidance on how Darlington Gymnastics Club uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect staff and volunteers who work for us, and the children, young people and parents who are members of the club to behave online.

## **Aims**

The aims of our online safety policy are:

- To protect all children and young people involved with the club and who make use of technology.
- To provide staff and volunteers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them on how to respond to incidents.
- To ensure that DGC is operating in line with the club's core values and within the law regarding how we behave.

## **Understanding the online world**

As part of using the internet and social media, Darlington Gymnastics Club will:

- Understand safety aspects – including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff and for children when using websites, social media, apps and other forms of digital information.
- To understand that the same safety aspects apply regardless of what device is being used.
- To ensure that we adhere to all relevant legislation and good practice guidelines (especially those issued by BG or CPSU) when using social media platforms
- Regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated, including
  - Making sure that concerns of abuse or disclosures that take place online are written into our reporting procedures
  - Incorporating online bullying (cyberbullying) into our policies
- Ensure that the individuals or companies involved in managing our online presence are appropriately and adequately trained.

## **Managing our online presence**

Our online presence, in whatever form, will adhere to the following guidelines:

- All social media accounts will be password protected
- All accounts will be monitored by a designated person, who will be nominated by the Directors
- The dedicated person will monitor all official accounts and will remove any inappropriate posts, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (or parents of those affected)
- No individuals identifying details will be posted on social media platforms
- No individual from the club will communicate in private through social media
- Parents will need to give full permission for photographs or video of their child to be posted on social media

## **What we expect from staff and volunteers**

- Staff should be aware of this policy and act in accordance with it
- Staff should immediately seek the advice of the clubs Welfare officer if they have any concerns about internet or social media use
- Staff should not `friend` or `follow` children and young people from personal accounts
- Staff should make sure that anything posted on personal accounts is appropriate, especially if young people follow them on social media.
- Staff should not communicate with young people via personal accounts or private messages
- Consideration should be made to all communications via social media – is this the appropriate way to communicate?
- If emails or text messages are sent to young people (in exceptional situations only) at least one other member of staff should be copied into the message
- Any messages sent should be ended / signed off appropriately, avoiding the use of emojis, terms of endearment or `kisses`
- Any disclosure of abuse reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face -to -face disclosure.
- Staff should ensure that phones and devices are secured by password when on the premises and should not allow children and young people access to privately owned devices.

## **What we expect of children and young people**

- Children and young people should be aware of this policy and agree to its terms
- We expect children and young people's behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in this and other policies

## **Using mobile phones (or other digital technology) to communicate**

We will take the following precautions to ensure young people's safety:

- Staff will avoid having children's or young people's mobile numbers and will always instigate contact through parents or guardians
- If direct contact is necessary with individual children, the purpose of this contact will be disclosed to parents beforehand
- An appropriate method of accountability will be established (such as copying another into the conversation), for each direct contact with a child
- Texts / social media contact should be used to communicate information – such as reminding of times, uniform etc. and should not be conversational
- If any communication is misinterpreted (or the young person uses contact details outside of a pre-arranged situation), the member of staff should:
  - End the conversation or stop replying
  - Suggest further communications are face to face
  - Inform the Welfare officer

## **Using mobile phones during sporting events**

The use of mobile phones is broadly discouraged at events. However, we will:

- Make those attending aware of how, and who, to contact in an emergency
- Inform parents of event timings in advance
- Provide information on guidance on safe and appropriate use of devices when they do have to be used.

## **Special Situations**

Parents who are coaches / volunteers at the club may well have access to the social media presence of other children in the club through their own children's accounts. In such cases the coaches:

- Can have gymnasts on the site provided the individuals are listed as friends of their own children
- Must not make direct contact with gymnasts
- Should not accept any `friend requests` via their personal sites
- Must inform the Welfare Officer of the links

## **Coaches / judges / club officials under 18**

The overarching requirement of any club representative, regardless of age, is that they will be governed by the requirements of this policy.

Where a young person needs access to an adult's social media, for professional development, for example, the Club Welfare Officer should be informed and should be able to access both accounts on request. In the case of younger children (aged 13-16) parental permission should be sought.

It is recognised that young people who work or volunteer at the club (and who also train) may already have social media links in place prior to their involvement with the club. They should be regularly reminded of the contents of this policy, and other appropriate club documents / policies, and their responsibility to behave in a professional manner.

## **Use of other digital devices**

The principles in this policy apply no matter which current or future technology is used.

Where any device is used as part of activities within the organisation (such as recording routines):

- We expect children and young people to adhere to the guidelines surrounding online use and behaviour
- We will establish appropriate (to the occasion) restrictions and controls.

**As an organisation we commit to implementing this policy and addressing any concerns quickly and with the framework of this and other policies.**

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